

**ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT  
HABITAT PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE  
HABITAT ENHANCEMENT AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PROPOSAL**

Game Branch / HPC Project Number: 12-205

**PROJECT INFORMATION**

**Project Title:** 13BN Bighorn Sheep Survey and Capture – 2013

**Region and Game Management Unit:** FOR2/Game Management Unit 13B

**Local Habitat Partnership Committee (LHPC):**

- Fredonia HPC

**Was the project presented to the LHPC?**

**YES** ☐ **NO** ☒ – The Fredonia HPC has not met in recent years.

**Has this project been submitted in previous years?** **YES** ☐ **NO** ☒

**If Yes, was it funded?** **YES** ☐ **NO** ☐ → **Funded HPC Project #(s):**

**Project Type:** Bighorn Sheep Survey and Capture

**Brief Project Summary:** A complete aerial survey of all known bighorn habitat in 13BN to determine population characteristics. If population characteristics suggest a capture is warranted, 20-30 animals will be captured using established protocols. Release sites have been previously identified based on statewide objectives and include: Hells Half Acre 18B; Kanab Creek Unit 13A/12BW/12AW; and Unit 37A.

**Big Game Wildlife Species to Benefit:** Desert Bighorn Sheep

**Implementation Schedule** (Month/Day/Year):

Project Start Date:

September 1, 2013

Project End Date:

December 1, 2013

**Environmental Compliance:**

NEPA Completed: Yes ☒ No ☐ N/A ☐

State Historic Preservation Office - Archaeological Clearance:

Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☒

Projected Completion Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Arizona Game and Fish Department EA Checklist: **Complete**

N/A ☐

Projected Completion Date: November 2011

**PROJECT FUNDING**

**Special Big Game License Tag Funds Requested:** \$ 75,300.00

**Cost Share or Matching Funds:** \$

**Total Project Costs:** \$ 75,300.00

**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION**

**Applicant** (please print):

Luke Thompson

**Address:**

3500 S. Lake Mary Road

Flagstaff, AZ 86001

**E-mail:**

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**Telephone:** 928-856-0724

**Date:** August 18, 2012

**AGFD Contact and Phone No.** (If applicant is not AGFD personnel):

**Project has been coordinated with:**

Tom McCall – Region II Game Specialists  
Amber Munig – AZGFD Big Game Mgmt. Supervisor  
Brian Wakeling – AZGFD Game Branch  
Lorraine Christian – BLM Arizona Strip Manager

**NEED STATEMENT – PROBLEM ANALYSIS:**

In 2005, the bighorn population in 13BN had expanded to a size that allowed the population to be used as a source population to meet bighorn management objectives related to translocations across the State. From 2005-2007, 3 captures of bighorn occurred in the Virgin River Gorge area of 13BN. A total of 82 bighorn were captured during these operations. The bighorn that were captured were used to supplement the populations in 13A (Kanab Creek) and the Hells Half acre area of 18B.

Each of these captures was completed following a thorough survey of the population to determine population characteristics. In 2008, capture operations were suspended based on survey data, and a capture has not occurred since.

Following grant approval, a survey is scheduled in October 2013 (dates TBD). Following this survey and if population characteristics allow, a capture is again proposed to assist in meeting Statewide and regional objectives in bighorn sheep management. This includes efforts for translocations across the State, and efforts to meet population management goals in the 13BN population. The captured bighorn will be used to supplement the bighorn population in the Hell's half acre area of 18B; Kanab Creek; and portions of 37A. Release sites will be determined following consultation with game branch personnel and regional staff.

**PROJECT OBJECTIVES:**

1. Conduct 12 hours of helicopter double-count survey in 13BN to determine population characteristics. A population level goal will be used to determine if capture operations can occur in 2013.
2. Following aerial surveys, and if population characteristics allow, capture up to 30 desert bighorn sheep from 13BN.
3. Captured bighorn sheep will be utilized to meet bighorn sheep management objectives in other parts of the state. In the past bighorn from 13BN have been translocated to 13A (Kanab Creek) and the Hell's Half acre area of 18B.
4. Continue to make progress towards meeting management objectives outlined in the Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Management Plan as amended May 2006. This includes the following objective related to captures and transplants:  
"Capture and transplant bighorn sheep to improve their distribution throughout suitable habitat. Conduct transplants at new or existing water sources to encourage site fidelity, rather than at dry sites in an attempt to draw bighorn into unoccupied habitat. The Core Team should prioritize proposed captures and transplants based upon the immediacy of need and habitat areas with higher percentages of unoccupied habitat. Transplants to support existing populations should be given higher priority than those which fill gaps in distribution or extend their range."

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND STRATEGIES:**

1. Following a helicopter double-count survey in October of 2013, a determination will be made based on population characteristics whether a capture is warranted in 13BN.
2. As appropriate based on this determination, a helicopter capture will occur in early November 2013. Capture operations will follow established Department protocols. Trained personnel will be on scene to address animal health. This may be a Department contracted veterinarian or Department personnel.
3. Up to 30 desert bighorn sheep will be captured in a ratio of approximately 1 ram:4 ewes. Young rams will be targeted and attempts will be made to capture adult ewes with lambs.
4. The captured animals will be translocated to other parts of Arizona to assist in meeting statewide and regional bighorn sheep management objectives.
5. VHF and/or GPS tracking collars may be placed on up to 10 of the bighorn to assist in post-release monitoring.

## **PROJECT LOCATION:**

Capture area: Virgin and Beaver Dam Mountains in 13BN

Release Area (determined based on statewide management objectives)

: Hells Half Acre in 18B;  
Kanab Creek – Unit 13A/12AW/12BW;  
Unit 37A.

## **LAND OWNERSHIP AT THE PROJECT SITE(S):**

(if the project area is private property, please state specifically and provide the landowner's name)

Land ownership is nearly 100% federally designated wilderness managed by the Arizona Strip Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management. The remainder of the lands outside wilderness are also managed by the BLM – Arizona Strip field Office.

## **HABITAT DESCRIPTION:**

Plant communities representative of Mojave Desert Scrub and higher elevation pinyon-juniper woodlands. Vegetative species include black brush, mortonia, cliffrose, creosote bush, bursage, and Utah Juniper in the higher elevations.

**ITEMIZED USE OF FUNDS:**

Special Big Game License Tag Funds

**ESTIMATED PROJECT COST SHEET**

2013 13BN Bighorn Sheep Survey and Capture

<b>Costs Category-Equipment, Labor, Administrative, Material</b>	<b>Special Tag Grant Dollars Requested</b>
<b>12 Hours of Helicopter Survey (includes fuel truck and ferry time)</b>	\$12,300.00
~ 15 hours of helicopter capture operations. Includes fuel truck and ferry time. <b>**Estimate includes 2 capture pilots/helicopters</b>	\$28,000.00
10 Loteck Satellite GPS Collars	\$35,000.00
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$ 75,300.00</b>

**LIST COOPERATORS AND DESCRIBE POTENTIAL PARTICIPATION:**

**Arizona Strip BLM** – Land management agency coordination with AGFD to meet project objectives.

**Papillion** – Contract helicopter services for survey.

**ADBSS** – Funding Partner.

**WOULD IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS PROJECT ASSIST IN PROVIDING, MAINTAINING, OR FACILITATING RECREATIONAL ACCESS?**

YES[X] NO[] N/A[]

Augmenting existing bighorn sheep populations across the State provides extensive recreation opportunity including hunting and wildlife viewing.

**PROJECT MONITORING PLAN:**

This project will be monitored by AGFD personnel, including individuals from Game Branch, regional staff, and the wildlife manager of 13B.

Data obtained from this project will be utilized to determine future management objectives for the bighorn population in 13BN, and will also be used as part of the annual hunt recommendation process to aid in determination of permit levels in the units.

**PROJECT MAINTENANCE:**

Long-term maintenance of this project will be near zero. It is not anticipated that future maintenance of the individual animals captured and released will be needed; however monitoring will occur on the released animals as described above.

**PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT TO BE FILED BY:**

Luke Thompson – Field Supervisor Arizona Strip

**WATER DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS** (*please use the worksheet below*): N/A

**TREE CLEARING/REMOVAL PROJECTS** (*please use the worksheet below*): N/A